

The Solution of the Nile Problem.

From the London Athenaeum we copy the following interesting communication on the solution of the Nile problem...

The details respecting the waters of the Upper Nile Basin, received from Dr. Livingstone since the appearance of my letter in the Athenaeum, No. 2171, of October 23 last, have suggested to me what I may call a solution of the Nile problem...

In the western portion of Southern Africa, within 300 miles from the coast of the Portuguese colony of Benguela, are the vast primeval forests of Olo-Vihanda, extending over several degrees in length, from north to south, but in breadth not more than seven or eight days' journey towards the north, and perhaps twice as much towards the south.

Of the countless streams that have here their sources it will be sufficient to name a few of the principal ones. Flowing westwards into the Atlantic Ocean are the Kuango, Congo or Zaire, the Kuanza, and the Kunene. Running south are the Kuito and the Kabango, which lose themselves in Ngami or some other lake in the interior.

The central and most important portion of these vast forests, containing the actual sources of the multitudinous streams issuing from them in every direction, is entirely unknown to Europeans. Their southern skirts have, however, been frequently traversed by traders and others from the coast, and especially by Ladislaus Magyar, an educated and accomplished Hungarian, in the service of the Government of Benguela, who unfortunately died in that colony on November 19, 1864, when on the eve of returning to Europe with the manuscript of the second and third volumes of his "Travels," the first volume of which, containing a description of Benguela only, had been published in 1859 at Pesth, in Hungary and German. It is from a letter from that traveller, dated November 16, 1858, and published by Dr. Petermann, in his "Geographische Mittheilungen" for 1860, pp. 227-235, that the foregoing particulars have been abstracted.

On the west and north these forests of Kiboko were approached by Dr. Livingstone on his former journey, and on February 27, 1854, he crossed the river Kasai or Kassavi (as I prefer to call it) within about 160 or 170 miles of its source. The following description of the river at that spot is given in page 332 of his "Missionary Travels":—"This is a most beautiful river, and very much like the Clyde in Scotland. The slope of the valley down to the stream is about 500 yards, and finely wooded. It is, perhaps, about 100 yards broad, and was winding slowly from side to side in the beautiful green glen, in a course to the north and northeast. In both the directions from which it came and to which it went, it seemed to be alternately mowed by sylvan vegetation or rich meadows covered with tall grass. The men pointed out its course, and said, 'Though you sail along it for months, you will turn without seeing the end of it.'

The river thus crossed and described by our countryman nearly sixteen years ago is, as I now purpose showing, the long-sought-for head of the Nile of Egypt. The following are the particulars I have collected respecting its course.

A few miles above the spot visited by the Scottish traveller, the Kassavi, having its course from west to east, breaks through two impending masses of rock, and forms the narrow channel of Mueva, and its winds gently round to the north, in which direction it was followed down by L. Magyar beyond the seventh parallel of south latitude. Below this point, he says, the river resumes its easterly direction, and, according to native report, it acquires a width of several miles, and though its waters are still fresh, its waves are at times so high as to be dangerous to navigation. He had reason to believe that the Kassavi attains this great breadth where it reaches the extensive lake of Mouvra (or Moura), otherwise Uhanja. At an earlier period the same traveller had reported to the Government of Benguela that the Kassavi was reported to fall into the Indian Ocean at some place unknown. Most important and valuable as this information is, it has been universally disregarded by geographers and cartographers, who, in direct contradiction of the express assertion of an intelligent European, speaking from his own personal knowledge, that below seven degrees of south latitude the Kassavi flows to the east, have concurred in turning the river's course round to the northwest and west, and making it to be one of the head-streams of the Kuango or Zaire river of Congo.

For this error my friend Dr. Livingstone is I fear, in great part responsible, as the following extract from page 457 of his work above cited will show:—"Several of the native traders here," at Cabango, in about 9 deg. 30 sec. S. lat. and 20 deg. 30 sec. E. long., "have visited the country of Lubu, lying far to the north of this; and there being some visitors also from the town of Mai, which is situated far down the Kasai, I picked up some information respecting those distant parts. In going to the town of Mai the traders crossed only two large rivers, the Loajima and Chihombo. The Kasai flows a little to the east of the town of Mai, and near it there is a large waterfall. They describe the Kasai as being there of very great size, and that it thence bends round to the west. On asking an old man, who was about to return to his chief Mai, to imagine himself standing at his home, and point to the confluence of the Quango and Kasai, he immediately turned, and pointing to the westward, said, 'When we travel five

days (thirty-five or forty miles) in that direction we come to it.' He stated also that the Kasai received another river, named the Lullibash. There is but one opinion among the Balonda respecting the Kasai and Quango. They invariably describe the Kasai as receiving the Quango, and beyond the confluence assuming the name of Zaire, or Zerezero. And the Kasai, even previous to the junction, is much larger than the Quango, from the numerous branches it receives."

Distinct as this information seems to be, I venture, nevertheless, to dispute its validity. In the first place, I demur generally to the conclusion drawn from the apparently concurrent testimony of native traders, than which often nothing can be more fallacious. In proof of this I may appeal to the Athenaeum of the 4th of December last, where I showed how Sir Samuel Baker had formally recorded his opinion, based on "inquiries had been made of traders, of white, and of brown," that the source of the Nile was "as nearly as possible upon the Equator," and that Speke's Nyanza had nothing to do with this river. Yet we see how the same traveller, by his discovery of the "Albert Nyanza" shortly afterwards, proved himself to have been grossly misinformed.

It may, however, be objected that there is one of Dr. Livingstone's informants—namely, the old man from Mai's town that pointed out the confluence of the Quango and Kasai—whose testimony is too precise and circumstantial to be thus set aside. I will therefore adduce a similar, if stronger, instance of native testimony given to myself, which conclusively demonstrates that the idea which the natives of Africa, and probably of other parts of the world likewise, have of the junction of rivers is often totally different from that entertained by ourselves.

When I was at the commercial town of Yaush, in Godjam, in August, 1842, I obtained from an intelligent Christian native trader, named Fanta, much valuable information respecting the provinces of Abyssinia east of the Abai, and north of Shoa. On my inquiring of him the course of the rivers Milli and Berkona, two affluents of the Hawash, he answered that he knew them well, and that they both joined the Abai. As I was aware that he did nothing of the sort, I began to fear that the whole of Fanta's information might be of the same apocryphal character. But a little explanation showed he was right according to his own way of thinking and speaking. On my expressing doubts as to the correctness of his assertion, he not only repeated it, but appealed to myself as a witness of the fact. "Do you not say," asked he, "that you came to Shoa through the Adal country?" I admitted it. "Consequently you crossed the Hawash, into which the Milli and Berkona flow." "This, too, I could not deny." "The Hawash, after passing between Adal and Shoa, runs round to the south of the latter country, between it and Gungay. Does it not?" "As I never heard of it, I did not know it. I did not think it worth while to dispute his assertion, though the fact is that the course of the Hawash is from north to south. "Well then," said he triumphantly, "the Hawash joins the Muger, the confluence of which latter river with the Abai you have seen with your own eyes." This last likewise was true enough, and so the worthy Fanta, by merely making the Hawash run the wrong way, and regarding the Muger as a continuation of it, because the two rivers have some of their sources together on Mount Salala, succeeded in proving to his own satisfaction, if not entirely to mine, that the Milli and Berkona join the Abai.

In like manner, the fact that some tributaries of Kuango (Quango) and the Kassavi (Kasai) have their sources together in the Mossamba Mountains, near the town of Mai, led Dr. Livingstone's informant to assert the confluence of these two rivers. This anecdote respecting Fanta was related by me as long ago as the year 1849, in my "Observations sur la Communication supposee entre le Niger et le Nil" (published in the "Nouvelles Annales des Voyages," tome serie, tom. ii. pp. 186-194), for the purpose of explaining and refuting a statement made by a Fellatah pilgrim, named Abd-er-Rahman, to the late M. Fulgence Fresnel, from which statement it learned that, in error, in spite of his own great local experience and knowledge, that a water communication actually existed between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, by means of a "Canal des deux Mers," as he called it, of which, unlike the one that has now just been opened, he imagined Nature had been at the expense. It is singular that, after a lapse of twenty years, I should have occasion to repeat this anecdote for the purpose of rebutting the inference from a similar native statement of the existence of a water communication between the Kuango (Congo) and the Nile.

This objection having thus been removed, the question of the lower course of the Kassavi is freed from all difficulty, and the river may now be allowed to run in the direction in which Ladislaus Magyar said it does. When that observant traveller first learned that the Kassavi flows towards the east, he had not, nor any one, the remotest idea of the possibility of its connection with the Nile; and as it was evident that so immense a river must enter the sea somewhere, it was natural for him to conclude that its mouth was in the Indian Ocean. Between 1853, when he expressed such an opinion, and 1858, when he wrote the letter published by Dr. Petermann, Magyar must, however, have heard of the "reputed great lake Nyassa," which Burton and Speke were sent to explore in 1856, and consequently nothing was more reasonable than that he should be allowed to make his river Kassavi run into that lake—for such I understand to be what he meant by his extensive lake Nhanja (by mistake written Uhanja). His other name for it, Mouvra or Moera, may possibly be intended for Moravi or Maravi, as the same lake was sometimes called. Had the Hungarian traveller lived to know of Baker's Albert Nyanza, he would of course have made this the recipient of the Kassavi; and he would thus have solved the Nile problem, instead of leaving to me its solution with the help of his materials. Still this good fortune might not have been mine, had it not been for the information now received from Dr. Livingstone, which has led me to refer to the former explorations and reports of him and other travellers in order to ascertain their bearing upon the question in the actual state of our knowledge. And I found the facts to be these. Ladislaus Magyar followed the course of the Kasai northwards as far as 6 deg. 30 min. south latitude, or about the 22d meridian of east longitude. Sir Samuel Baker has laid down the Albert Nyanza as extending southwards as far as about 2 deg. north latitude and 28 deg. 30 min. east longitude. Between these two points there is a space of some 600 geographical miles in a direct line, which has to be bridged over. But this distance is shortened by the explorers at each end themselves. The one in the south was told that the Kassavi runs eastwards into "Nhanja"; the other in the north was informed that "Nyanza" comes from the west, "in which direction its extent is unknown. And now the explorer of the

Chambeze comes between the two, and supplies almost all that was wanting to make the union between the Kassavi and the Albert Nyanza a demonstrable fact.

In the first place, Dr. Livingstone has ascertained that the Chambeze, the "New Zambezi" of some of our maps, whose sources have been discovered by him between 10 and 12 deg. south latitude, does not communicate with the more southerly river Zambezi, but has its separate course northwards. Such being the case, the Chambeze must be the upper course either of the Kuango (Congo) or of the Nile. It is also a fact, established by the Scottish traveller, that the bed of the Chambeze possesses an absolute elevation of only 3000 feet. But it being likewise a fact that the water-parting in the west, in which are the sources of both the Kuango and the Zambezi, is much higher than 3000 feet; and it appearing further that this water-parting continues northwards along the twentieth meridian or thereabouts, as it is approximately marked on my maps of "The Basin of the Nile" of 1849, 1859, and 1864—for the great lake discovered on the Equator by Signor Piaggia has an elevation of 4000 or 5000 feet, and is therefore on the eastern slope of that water-parting—it becomes physically impossible for the Chambeze to join the Kuango, or any other river of the west coast of Africa; so that it can only join the Nile.

Further, Dr. Livingstone has ascertained that the Chambeze, after passing through several lakes and taking the name, first of Luapula, and then of Luabala, flows in a north-northwest direction to Ulenge, in the country west of Lake Tanganyika, and that the waters of Ulenge are then all gathered up by the Luira, a large river that by means of various confluent drains the western side of the great valley-plain south of Tanganyika; as the Chambeze drains its eastern side; and he was informed that the Luira then flows on into Lake Chowamba, which he first believed to be identical with Baker's Albert Nyanza, but now imagines (if I read his last report correctly) to be "an unvisited lake west or southwest of Ulenge."

This river Luira the traveller did not see, but it was pointed out to him on the eleventh parallel of south latitude as being there so large as never to be passable except in canoes, which proves that it must come from a considerable distance south of that parallel. It might reasonably be contended that the Luira is the lower course of the Kassavi. But my impression (which still may be erroneous) is that it is a separate river, running halfway between the Kassavi and the Chambeze. From the position, however, which, under any circumstances, the Kassavi assumes, with its course explored by L. Magyar northwards as far as 6 deg. 30 min. south latitude, whilst the Luira, on its side, is shown by Dr. Livingstone to come from beyond the eleventh parallel, it is manifest that, even if these two rivers do not fall immediately into Baker's Albert Nyanza, the one not less than the other, together with the Chambeze, must of necessity join it and the Nile, though at the present moment the precise point of junction may be unknown; the Kassavi being not only the largest and most distant, but also the most direct stream of them all.

Such being the case, I feel myself justified in affirming that this river, the Kassavi or Kasai, is the head stream and upper course of the Nile of Egypt; that its principal sources are in the primeval forests of Olo-Vihanda and Kiboko on the Mossamba Mountains, which are now shown to be "the great hydrophletum of the continent of Africa, the central point of division between the waters flowing to the Mediterranean, to the Atlantic, and to the Indian Ocean" ("Journal of the Royal Geographical Society," vol. xvii. p. 82); as also to Ngami or some other inland lake; that the approximate position of this, the true Caput Nili, is between 11 degrees 30 minutes and 12 degrees south latitude, and in about 18 degrees or 19 degrees east longitude, nearly due east of the port of St. Philip of Benguela on the west coast of Africa, and within 300 geographical miles of the Atlantic Ocean; and that this marvellous river, the largest in the world, is thus found to stretch across forty-two degrees of latitude, or, if measured directly, over one-eighth part of the entire circumference of the globe. And, in affirming this, I have the gratification of being able to say, on behalf of my native country, the country of all the Upper Nile explorers—Burton, Speke, Grant, Baker and Livingstone—that though through past ages it has been said—

Null contingit gloria gonti Ut Nilo sit letia sicuti this can now be said no longer.

CHARLES BENTLEY.

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The envelopes and wrappers must be furnished as delivered with reasonable security, complete in all respects, ready for use, and in such quantities as may be required to fill the daily orders of postmasters; the deliveries to be made either at the Post Office Department, Washington, D. C., or at the office of an agent duly authorized to inspect and receive the same; the place of delivery to be at the discretion of the Department, and the contractor to be delivering as well as all expenses of packing, dressing, labeling, and water-proofing, to be paid by the contractor.

It is notified that the Department will require, as a condition of the contract, that the envelopes and wrappers shall be manufactured and stored in such manner as to ensure security against fire by theft. The manufacturer must at all times be subject to the inspection of an agent of the Department, and must require the stipulations of the contract to be faithfully observed.

The dies for embossing the postage stamps on the envelopes and wrappers are to be executed to the satisfaction of the contractor, and the dies, in style and material, and they are to be provided, renewed, and kept in order at the expense of the contractor. The Department reserves the right of requiring new dies for any stamps, or denominations of stamps not now used, and any changes of die or colors shall be made without extra charge.

Specimens of envelopes and wrappers now in use may be seen at any of the principal post offices, but these specimens are not to be received as a standard for the new contract; bidders are therefore invited to submit samples of other and different qualities and styles, including the paper proposed to be used in the manufacture of envelopes, wrappers, and boxes, and make their bids accordingly.

The contract will be awarded to the bidder whose proposal, although it be not the lowest, is considered most advantageous to the Department, taking into account the prices, quality of the samples, workmanship, and the ability and ability of the bidder to manufacture and deliver the envelopes and wrappers in accordance with the terms of this contract, and to furnish the same in accordance with the requirements of the Department, and to be considered unless accompanied by a sufficient and satisfactory guarantee. The Postmaster-General also reserves the right to reject any and all bids, if in his judgment the interests of the Government require it.

Before closing a contract the successful bidder may be required to furnish a sufficient security, in the sum of \$200,000, will be required for the faithful performance of the contract, as required by the seventh section of the act of Congress, approved the 26th of August, 1856, and passed into law, and the contract will be made quarterly, after proper adjustment of accounts.

The Postmaster-General reserves to himself the right to annul the contract whenever the same, or any part thereof, is offered for sale for the purpose of speculation; and under no circumstances will the transfer of the contract to another contractor, or to any party who shall be, in the opinion of the Postmaster-General, shall be able to fulfill the conditions thereof, and the contractor's original contract right is also reserved to annul the contract for a failure to perform faithfully any of its stipulations.

The number of envelopes of different sizes, and of wrappers issued by the Postmaster-General, from the 1st of July, 1869, was as follows, viz:—

- No. 1. Note size—1,114,000. No. 2. Ordinary letter size; (not heretofore used)—4,169,000. No. 3. Full letter size—67,867,500. No. 4. Extra letter size—4,304,500. No. 5. Extra letter size—4,304,500. No. 6. Official size—604,600. No. 7. Extra official size—1700. Wrappers—3,526,800.

Bids should be enclosed in a separate envelope and sealed, marked "Proposals for Stamped Envelopes and Wrappers," and addressed to the Third Assistant Postmaster-General, Post Office Department, Washington, D. C.

JOHN A. J. CRESWELL, Postmaster-General.

PROPOSALS FOR STREET CLEANING.

SEPALED PROPOSALS will be received at the office of the BOARD OF HEALTH, No. 5, corner of SIXTH and SANSON Streets, Philadelphia, until 12 o'clock noon on the 26th day of February, 1870, for cleaning the streets, gutters, gutters, and other public places, and for the removal of all other public highways, and the immediate removal of all filth and dirt therefrom, after the same has been collected together; also, the removal of ashes and the collection and burial of all dead animals embraced within the following districts, viz:—